

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend claims 1, 14, 21, and 23 as indicated below.

A listing of the status of all claims 1-29 in the present patent application is provided below.

1. (Currently Amended) A storage management system for backing up digital content of a storage system comprising a plurality of units of storage, wherein the storage management system comprises:

at least one data store;

wherein the storage management system automatically intercepts all write commands issued to the plurality of units of storage, each write command comprising an instruction to overwrite at least one unit of storage with new data;

wherein the storage management system copies, prior to execution of each write command, old data present at the at least one unit of storage into the at least one data store, wherein a record of the old data is timestamped, thereby storing backup data that correspond to a ~~continuous period of time~~ time period uninterrupted by any pre-existing volume-level snapshot of the plurality of units of storage; and

wherein the storage management system is further configured

to identify historic data that were present in a specified portion of the plurality of units of storage ~~at any point~~ during the ~~continuous period of time~~ time period based at least in part on the backup data, the identification identifying less than a pre-existing volume-level snapshot of the storage system.

2. (Previously Presented) The storage management system of claim 1, wherein the storage system further comprises one or more physical storage devices on which the digital content of the storage system is stored.

3. (Previously Presented) The storage management system of claim 2, wherein an address for accessing the storage system comprises a device identifier and a location identifier.

4. (Previously Presented) The storage management system of claim 3, wherein the device identifier identifies a physical storage device.

5. (Previously Presented) The storage management system of claim 3, wherein the device identifier identifies a logical device.

6. (Previously Presented) The storage management system of claim

1, wherein the digital content of the storage system can be accessed by specifying an address and a time, and wherein the time specifies that the digital data retrieved from the address is the most recent digital data that was written to the address at or before the time.

7. (Previously Presented) The storage management system of claim 6, wherein the time is explicitly specified in a request to access a unit of storage.

8. (Previously Presented) The storage management system of claim 6, wherein the time is specified in a command to the storage system separate from a request to read a unit of storage.

9. (Previously Presented) The storage management system of claim 6, wherein the storage management system creates a virtual device, wherein the time is specified when the virtual device is created, and is applied when the virtual device is accessed.

10. (Previously Presented) The storage management system of claim 9, wherein new data is written to the virtual device without overwriting data that was written to the storage system after the time specified when the virtual device was created.

11. (Previously Presented) The storage management system of claim 6, wherein a command to the storage system specifies that the time is implicitly a current time.

12. (Previously Presented) The storage management system of claim 6, wherein the time is specified relative to a current time.

13. (Previously Presented) The storage management system of claim 1, wherein the units of storage are blocks.

14. (Currently Amended) A method for backing up digital content of a storage system having a plurality of units of storage, the method comprising:

intercepting, automatically, all write commands issued to the storage system, wherein each write command comprises an instruction to overwrite at least one unit of storage with new data;

copying, prior to execution of each write command, old data present at the at least one unit of storage into a data store, wherein a record of the old data is timestamped, thereby storing backup data for a period of time; and

identifying historic data that were present in a specified portion of the plurality of units of storage ~~at any point~~ during the period of time based at least in part on the backup data, the identification identifying less than the entire plurality of units of storage.

15. (Original) The method of claim 14, wherein the address comprises a device identifier and a location identifier.

16. (Original) The method of claim 14, wherein specifying the time comprises implicitly specifying the time.

17. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 16, wherein implicitly specifying the time comprises sending a command to the storage system to use a current time as the time.

18. (Original) The method of claim 14, further comprising presenting a virtual storage device for which the time is implicitly set to the specified time for all addresses of the virtual storage device.

19. (Original) The method of claim 18, further comprising writing data to the virtual storage device.

20. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 14, wherein specifying the time comprises specifying the time relative to a current time.

21. (Currently Amended) An apparatus for storing data, the apparatus comprising:

a storage appliance that interfaces with a computer;

one or more physical storage devices that interface with the storage appliance, the one or more physical storage devices having a plurality of storage units, each such physical storage device controlled by the storage appliance;

wherein the storage appliance comprises at least one current store and at least one time store, the at least one current store maintaining a current mirror copy of digital content in the one or more physical storage devices, and wherein, each time immediately before a storage unit is overwritten with new data and without pre-scheduling, any old data present at that storage unit is timestamped and stored in the at least one time store, thereby storing backup data for a period of time; and

wherein the storage appliance is further configured to identify historic data that were present in a specified portion

of the plurality of units of storage ~~at any point~~ during the period of time based on the backup data stored in the at least one time store and the current mirror copy of digital content maintained in the at least one current store, the identification identifying less than all of the plurality of units of storage.

22. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of claim 21, wherein the time specifies that the digital data retrieved from the address is the most recent data that was written to the address at or before the time.

23. (Currently Amended) A computer readable medium having code for causing a processor to control a storage system, the storage system comprising a plurality of units of storage, the computer readable medium comprising:

code adapted to automatically intercept write commands issued to the storage system, wherein each write command comprises an instruction to overwrite at least one unit of storage with new data; and

code adapted to copy, prior to execution of each write command and without pre-scheduling, old data present at the at least one unit of storage into a data store, wherein a record of the old data is timestamped, thereby storing backup data for a

period of time; and

code adapted to identify historic data that were present in a specified portion of the plurality of units of storage ~~at any point~~ during the period of time based at least in part on the backup data, the identification identifying less than all of the plurality of units of storage.

24. (Previously Presented) The computer readable medium of claim 23, wherein the storage device command is a write command and the specified time is a current time.

25. (Previously Presented) The computer readable medium of claim 23, wherein the storage device command is a read command and the specified time is a past time.

26. (Previously Presented) The storage management system of claim 1, wherein the at least one data store comprises a first data store and a second data store, and wherein the first data store maintains a current mirror copy of digital data stored in the plurality of units of storage, and wherein the second data store contains the old data and the timestamped record of the old data.

27. (Previously Presented) The storage management system of claim 26, wherein, after the old data is copied to the second data store, the at least one unit of storage is overwritten with the new data, and the current mirror copy in the first data store is updated with the new data.

28. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 14, further comprising:

maintaining, in a second data store, a current mirror copy of the digital content of the storage system; and

overwriting the at least one unit of storage with the new data and updating the current mirror copy in the second data store with the new data, wherein the overwriting and the updating occur after the old data is copied to the data store.

29. (Previously Presented) The computer readable medium of claim 23, further comprising:

code adapted to maintain, in a second data store, a current mirror copy of the digital content of the storage system; and

code adapted to overwrite the at least one unit of storage with the new data and update the current mirror copy in the second data store with the new data after the old data is copied to the data store.